Palo Alto Street Names

By Guy C. Miller

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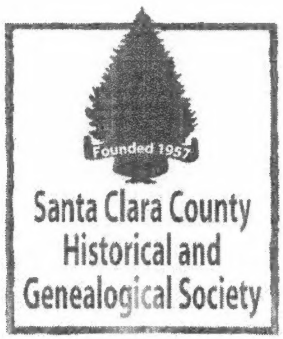
Notes:

- The original work was dated February 13, 1932
- Original in possession of the Santa Clara County Archives, San Jose, California
- Scanned by the Santa Clara Historical and Genealogical Society



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PALO ALTO STREET NAMES

TIMOTHY HOPKINS, FOUNDER, SELECTED ORIGINAL NAMES

- By GUY C. MILLER -

The original townsite of Palo Alto was purchased by Timothy Hopkins from Henry W. Seale and the town was platted first under the name of University Park. Mr. Hopkins has also been credited with the selection of the original street names. This claim has been disputed at various times, with especial mention made of W. H. Mills, then general land agent of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Mills was one of the agents of Hopkins in the sale of lots in the new town and the public library has a blueprint, presented by W. H. Myrick of Mayfield, bearing the legend "University Park (Palo Alto station, coast division, S. P. Co.), property of Timothy Hopkins, Wm. H. Mills, Agent, R. R. Building, Fourth & Townsend Sts., San Francisco."

Recently Mr. Hopkins made the statement to the writer that he chose the names, and any criticism for such choice he would take upon himself. This statement was later repeated both to the writer and to one of our pioneers, Mr. Emory E. Smith, with the addition by Mr. Hopkins, that he gave considerable thought to the subject. He does not, however, consider the matter of great importance and once wrote "It really matters little who named the streets." The writer has taken a contrary attitude but his persistence in following up details and checking different stories has been met with unfailing courtesy on the part of Mr. Hopkins, who finally wrote in answer to the positive claim that Mills had chosen the new name of Channing avenue: "The original list, without exception, were selected by me alone."

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There is an old story that the choice of names was referred by Mr. Hopkins to his wife. As they were about to depart for Europe a quick solution was found in her suggestion that the names be taken from the books in their library. Mr. Hopkins comments: "There is no truth in this legend. The literary names were selected because of their appropriateness to a college town."

Most of Names Literary

These literary names scarcely need explanation. Homer and Seneca are classic authors. Addison, Chaucer, Cowper, Kingsley, Lytton, Marlowe and Pope are English writers. The others are American authors or statesmen.

Waverley, chosen for Scott's novel, appears on the first official map as "Waverly." The latter is said to be the standard spelling of an old English family name and this may account for the confusion which continues to this day. Before the recent change in our city transportation the Waverley street bus carried a card in front with that spelling, while one on the side gave the alternative form. It is recalled that the town trustees once rejected some street signs because of the spelling "Waverly." This action or some other which it is impossible to find because a much-needed index in the city records is lacking, seems to have settled the matter officially for Waverley.

Of the non-literary forms University is obvious.

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Guinda is Spanish for wild cherry, though our pronunciation "gwinda" does not follow the rules of that language. Talula, which appealed to Mr. Hopkins for its music, ran through what is now Rinconada Park parallel to the town boundary, where later Hopkins avenue was opened (the latter was named by J. F. Parkinson). Long officially closed, part of the old street is still in use at the side of the municipal plant.

Use of Personal Names

Kellogg was a name in the Hopkins family and Alma that of a family friend. The latter appealed also for its simplicity and because, beginning with the first letter of the alphabet, it seemed appropriate for the first street above the railroad. The name has gone far beyond our boundaries with the street continued to Mountain View, where the name was recently adopted for the extension in that town.

It seems not to have occurred to Mr. Hopkins to follow the idea suggested by Alma and arrange the other names in alphabetical order, the lack of which is the only serious criticism ever made on the subject. When the town was much smaller the late H. W. Simkins, then editor of the Times, suggested a rearrangement to carry out this plan but obtained no response.

No satisfactory reason can be given for Forest, even by Mr. Hopkins. The name frequently appeared in early days spelled with two r's and is shown thus on some maps.

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While this suggests that the name may have been given for the actor, Forrest, the official map bears the present spelling. The name was probably determined by the oaks for which Forest avenue was noted even then, when trees were much more numerous than now, especially in the streets.

Location and Names Changed

Marlowe, running at an acute angle from University and Pope to the creek, through what is now Mr. Medcraft's lawn, has been "moved." The street was closed and the name given to the new connection between the end of Palo Alto avenue in Crescent Park and University avenue. (Crescent Park, purchased at the same time as the rest of the townsite, was not added to the town until some years later and its present name and its streets are recent developments).

The first Pope street was the single block from the creek to University avenue. The one-block street leading from this intersection at an angle to Hamilton was called Chaucer. Neglected in its original adobe state and with no residences it was of no importance for many years, but its existence was finally recognized by dropping the name and making it part of Pope. The opening of North Palo Alto with its Pope street opposite ours, the building of the bridge, the extension of mail delivery across the creek, all combined to cause such confusion that last December our Pope street was abolished and the name of Chaucer not only restored to its original location

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but given to the old Pope street as well.

Early History in Old Roads

Middlefield road was a prominent San Mateo county highway, with a history going back at least to 1853, and the name was naturally given to the connecting street. The survey beginning at the railroad placed the street somewhat out of line with the road but this was not considered of any consequence in the traffic conditions of that day.

Embarcadero road has a history quite as old as Middlefield and may antedate it. Laid out on present lines in 1872 and named long before that, both street and name had official standing when the town was founded and both were accepted as they were, with the street then and for long afterward the town boundary.

Palo Alto avenue was not one of the original streets, and its story belongs with the so-called "in-between" streets. All of the latter resulted when purchasers, singly or in groups, found themselves in possession of large blocks which would easily lend themselves to the opening of new streets, thus adding materially to frontage. As not all of the first buyers did this we have the unsatisfactory condition of streets which "jump" and of others which do not run entirely through the city; also of the same street with different names in different locations. One of these, Scott, has a surprisingly long history.

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As an illustration of the influence of names it may be mentioned that locating the Unitarian church on Channing avenue was not entirely an accident. The field secretary, with Prof. H. D. Gray then and now a professor in the Stanford English department, and Prof. Karl G. Rendtorff, recently retired head of the German department, "for sentimental reasons" chose a lot on this street. This it was necessary to discard. "The final selection" however, according to Professor Rendtorff, "was largely due to the association the name of Channing has for any friend or member of the Unitarian Society."

The story or the origin and meaning of Palo Alto street names would naturally begin with those found on the first plat of the town, made for Timothy Hopkins and filed at his request with the county recorder February 27, 1889, under the name of University Park. Mr. Hopkins, however, made sales immediately after this plat was made and before the map had been recorded.

One of these early sales, handled by the pioneer realestate dealer, J. J. Morris, and embracing blocks 49 and 50, was made to a group of six people, one from Reno, the others from Benicia. The property was at once subdivided and put on the market by the new purchasers, who filed their map November 28, 1888. The large blocks naturally suggested to the owners the advantage of a new street. This street,

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the first to be put through the original blocks, was named Fulton for one of the group, and as the plat was recorded three months before that of the entire town this became the first of our streets to receive an official name.

Teachers First Buyers

Mr. Hopkins divided all blocks uniformly into quarters, with no further subdivisions. Four members of this group each took one of the units, the others each buying two quarter blocks. Three were teachers in the Benicia schools, one of whom, Emma M. Garretson, is known to be deceased. Of Cassie Cook and Mary E. Moore no trace can be found.

J. E. Crooks bought a quarter in each block facing University avenue (between Middlefield and Guinda). Crooks served through the Civil War, part of the time as telegrapher at Grant's headquarters, and held the same position at the White House for four years when Grant was president. Coming west he was telegrapher at various stations between Sacramento and Truckee until he was made land agent for the railroad. In this capacity he played an important part in settling the difficulties with the Mussel Slough squatters on railroad land in Tulare county, a story treated by Frank Norris in "The Octapus". He organized the Bank of Benicia in 1882 and served the town as school director and

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mayor. He also founded the Bank of Hayward about 1904 and died there in 1908 at the age of 65.

Jesse Poundstone, then an employee of the Bank of Benicia, bought the quarter block next to Crooks, paying $400 for the property and finding considerable difficulty in making a resale. Mr. Poundstone, apparently the only surviving member of this group, has long been a prominent farmer at Grimes, Colusa county. He has made a reputation as a leader in reclamation problems, is manager of the West Side Levee District, and has been for 30 years trustee and for 26 years president of Reclamation District 108. He is an active worker in the State Chamber of Commerce and is a member of the California Water Resources Commission by appointment of Governor Rolph in August last.

It is impossible to determine exactly how the name of Fulton came to be chosen for the new street, whether by agreement or by suggestion of someone in the group. Mr. Poundstone states that the buyers of the land were more interested in making a resale than in choosing a name. No papers or letters on the subject are available but statements from Mr. Poundstone, from a younger brother of Crooks, now mayor of Benicia, and from the widow of Fulton, remove all doubt that the name was given in honor of Fulton and not, as has been commonly assumed, for the Fulton of steamboat fame. The map was filed for record by Crooks and it is a reasonable assumption that he gave the name of his associate and friend to

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the street.

Fulton Born in Ohio

Robert Lardin Fulton was born in Ohio. After a common school education and a short business experience he went to work for the Erie Railroad. In later years he wrote that he had been telegraph operator, station agent, brakeman, conductor, and train dispatcher before he could vote. While on the Erie he sensed the opportunity offered by the building of the new road to the West and volunteered in the service of the Central Pacific. He was taken on as dispatcher, holding the position until the road was finished.

On the completion of the railroad Fulton was made agent in charge of lands from Colfax to Ogden, serving with great credit until he was retired on pension in 1914, after 40 years in the position. He edited the Reno Gazette for a number of years and became one of the best-known citizens of Nevada. Interested especially in reclamation, better farming methods, and furtherance of education, he gave much time to writing and speaking. Though holding no office he was a strong force in politics, taking a decided stand on moral issues. He twice led a successful fight against the Louisiana lottery and was instrumental in the passage of an anti-gambling measure.

Author of "Epic"

Out of Fulton's experience with the railroad he wrote "The Epic of the Overland", valuable for its sidelights

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on the building of the Central Pacific, with much material not found elsewhere. Permission to quote from this has been readily granted by his friend and publisher, A. M. Robertson. In an introductory biography Fulton's character is summed up in a paragraph which reads: "the outstanding feature is his splendid personality" which "impressed itself in a thousand ways upon his intimate friends and the state at large. He will long be remembered as a public-spirited citizen, shaper of the destinies of the commonwealth, and d elightful friend".

Fulton's death occurred October 25, 1920, at the age of 73. He had several f riends in Palo Alto whom he visited many times, and it is probable that some of these friends are still living here.

(Fulton's photograph, and a copy of the map in the county recorder's office dedicating the street are on file in the public library, where they are available for reference).

Since the publication of the above, in the Palo Alto Times of February 18, 1932, the women whom it had previously been impossible to locate have been found. Miss Mary E. Moore, now retired, is living in Berkeley. Cassie Cook is now Mrs. Katherine C. Rich. After twenty-five years of teaching in the Oakland schools she also retired recently and is living in Piedmont.

American Guide
District #9

S-700

MORGAN HILL,

This thriving community, situated on the floor of Santa Clara Valley, twenty miles South of San Jose on U.S.Highway 101, is the center of large orchards and vineyards, consisting chiefly of Prunes and Wine Grapes.

The first settlers in the district, other than the early Spanish ranchers, were the Murphy famile, consisting of Martin Murphy Sr, and the following children, Martin Jr, his wife and four children, James, his wife and one child, Bernard, Daniel, John. M, and Helen Murphy, who left Missouri with a large party early in 1844, and arrived at Sutter's Fort late that fall.

Hearing of the revolt then in progress, of the Mexicans against Spanish Rule, Martin Murphy, traveled to Los Angeles, and enlisted in the Mexican Army. After the successful end to the revolt early in 1845, he gathered his family together and moved to the Southern part of Santa Clara County, purchasing and locating on the Rancho Ojo de Agua de la Coche, where he resided for many years.

Early in 1852, William Host settled on the site of the Twenty One Mile House, erecting a small two story house, which was purchased late that year by William Tennant. The structure burned down in 1853, and a much larger structure erected by Tennant, and was a regular stage stop on the road to Gilroy, and other points to the south for many years.

The Murphy land holding acquired in various manners, were vast, and it is claimed that upon Martin Jr's death in 1883 their holdings exceeded three million acres in the State of Calif-ornia, while in Nevada and Arizona they had other large ranches. In Santa Clara Valley his holdings of land were from the Southern boundary of the Rancho Laguna Seca, which was owned by Capt. Fisher, to the Northern boundary of the Las Animas Rancho just north of the present town of Gilroy, a distance of Approximately Fifteen miles in length, and comprised the Rancho La Polka, Rancho Las Uvas, Rancho de Sanfrancisco de Las Llagas, Pastoria de Las Borregas, Rancho Ojo de Agua de la Coche, and other parcels names of which appear to have been forgotten.

Martin Murphy Sr, and Capt. Fisher operated a slaughter house in San Francisco, in the late 50's, and it appears from sources of information available, that upon after obtaining the number of cattle the seller had, took over cattle, land and all in the course of the transaction.

Numbers of other settlers moved into the district in the late 50's and early 60's, among whom were the O'Toole, Kirby, and Cochrane families.

Kirby purchased several hundred acres from Murphy along the Coyote Creek, north of Madrone, eredting a house in 1861, which has been in continuous use , and still occupied by his descendents, having seen the rearing of three generations.

Cochrane arriving in the early 60's, purchased the rancho of a Spaniard named Hernandez, located in the lower Coyote Canyon, on the road to the Madrone Mineral Springs. The house of adobe bricks and logs, was erected in 1835 by Hernandez, and except for roof repairs and a coat of stucco on the outside, is still in daily use, being occupied at the present time by Mrs. A. M. Jackson, a descendent of Cochrane's.

This house was used several times as a resting place by Tiburcia Vasquez, on his many journeys between San Jose and San Ysidro. He always placed his horse in the barn, leaving the saddle on, but loosening the girth, in order to be able to make a quick exit if necessary.

To the west of Morgan Hill, stands a peak, originally called Loma de Tora, later known as Murphy's Peak and today called Nob Hill, by all except the older residents, who still refer to is as de Tora or Murphy's Peak. On the western slope, about half way up, is a cave, which as been used in times past as a temporary hideout for bandits, among whom were Vasquez and his band, who used to travel from the cave to the Twenty One Mile House for their entertainment.

Mr. Morgan Hill, from whom the town derives its name, arrive in 1882, was married in 1883 to the daughter of Daniel Murphy, given a tract of land north of the present time, and erected, a two story home, with a large veranda on three sides, which at the time was considered of a somewhat pretentious nature. The home, which is standing at the present time, in a well preserved condition, is located about seventy five yards from U.S.Highway 101, on the east side, and can be readily seen from the road, upon driving into Morgan Hill from the north.

The town was incorporated Nov. 10th, 1906, with a council form of government. The present Mayor ~~being~~ is Mr. John Telfer.

~~Sydney Russ.~~